



Connecticut Chapter
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*February 23, 2016, Legislative Committee on Housing
Written Testimony submitted by Jeffrey Arn, President
On behalf of the membership of Conn-NAHRO*

Conn-NAHRO is the Connecticut chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials; its membership is comprised of Public Housing Authorities and other individuals and organizations involved in affordable housing.

Proposed S.B. No. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING AUTOMATED HANDICAP DOORS FOR ELDERLY HOUSING COMPLEXES. (OPPOSE)

Senator Winfield, Representative Butler and members of the Housing Committee:

I am writing to you to express my concerns with Proposed Senate Bill No. 150 and the impact it will have on the housing authorities and our tenants throughout the state. As the Executive Director at the Vernon Housing Authority and a commissioner for the Coventry Housing Authority I see the well intentioned meaning of this bill and I applaud the concern for our tenants with mobility issues.

I am sure that most of my colleagues throughout the state would agree that at face value this is an insightful idea. However, as written this bill is not practical and most importantly financially feasible for most housing authorities. This bill as it currently stands does not include the funding for housing authorities to perform the work that would be required. This would be a financial hardship for most housing agencies especially the smaller ones that operate on very tight budgets.

As well-meaning as this bill is it would create yet another unfunded mandate for housing authorities that they cannot afford. The State of Connecticut does not provide operating subsidies for our elderly and disabled developments and housing authorities rely solely on the rents collected to operate them. Generally these rents are 30 of a tenant's income or base rent whichever is greater. When we have added costs like this the only way to cover expenses is to raise base rents. This can cause a great hardship on our tenants if the base rents are more than 30% of their income as properties are no longer affordable for them as a vast majority of our elderly and disable residents rely entirely on fixed incomes such as social security and Social Security Disability.

One last issue that is relevant to this conversation is that like any other properties housing authority buildings are subject to all A.D.A codes. We are required to provide accessible entrances just like any other property owner. To single out housing authorities in a bill like such as this would appear to be unfair as it does not address properties that serve the same clientele and are owned by non-profit organizations or private for profit companies. Both of which typically have more operating funds and budgets that can afford to absorb this added expense.

In conclusion I would ask that you not support this bill as it currently stands and that you look further into the costs involved and the possibility of state funding for this well intentioned concept.